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# MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

VOL. XXV.

BALTIMORE, DECEMBER, 1910.

No. 8.

## A. Marshall Elliott

1844 - 1910

On the morning of November the ninth, A. Marshall Elliott died at his home in Baltimore. His death closes a long and notable chapter in the annals of Modern Language work in America, a chapter in the making of which his part was essential. Of Quaker stock, he was born in Pasquotank County, North Carolina, and received his secondary education at the New Garden Boarding School, later known as Guilford College. Graduating from Haverford in 1866, he taught for one year in his home school, and then entered Harvard, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1868. Soon after this he went to Europe and continued his studies, returning to America in 1876 as Associate in the first faculty of the Johns Hopkins University. The opening years of his connection with the institution were devoted to the organization of its Romance work, and the success of his efforts was recognized by his promotion in 1892 to be Professor of the Romance Languages.

Early in his teaching career he felt the need of unifying and broadening the work in Modern Languages, and conceived the idea of the Modern Language Association of America. In 1883, through his initiative, the Association was organized and he became its first secretary, and editor of its publications. After nine years of service, he resigned from these offices, but in 1894 served a term as president.

In order to furnish a medium for the issuing of critical material in the field of Modern Languages, Professor Elliott founded in 1886 the *Modern Language Notes*, of which he has remained managing editor up to the present time. This journal was created to reflect existing scholarship in America, and above all to raise the standards of Modern Language teaching and quicken the interest in Modern Language work. Scientific articles; critical reviews of text-books; items of academic interest; lists of recent publications, of foreign book catalogues, of contributors to the *Notes*;—these were made the means to attain its aim. The same energy and resourcefulness that gave life to the Modern Language Association overcame the mechanical and financial difficulties which confronted him in publishing the *Notes*. There was but one subscriber to the first issue. During the first seventeen years, the journal was printed in a temporary structure in the back yard of his residence, while the editing and most of the folding, sewing, wrapping and addressing was done in his library.

Professor Elliott's training as a scholar was exceptional. Eight years of residence, travel, and study in Europe gave him the broad foundation which is one of the striking features of his teaching and his writings. His first inclination seems to have been toward specializing in Oriental languages, but at the same time the comparatively new science of Romance philology commanded a liberal share of his interest. Upon his return to America, this interest in the modern field was intensified by the manifest need of raising to the plane of academic studies the languages which had hitherto been regarded mainly as a medium for colloquial intercourse. He was well equipped for leadership by his intimate knowledge of the educational conditions and the languages of the various European countries—a knowledge kept fresh by his yearly trips abroad.

In the field of productive scholarship, he was a frequent contributor, during his early years, to *Education*, the *Journal of Education*, the *American Journal of Philology*, the *Transactions of the Modern Language Association*, and *Modern Language Notes*. His contributions ranged from general themes, such as "Modern Languages as a College Discipline," to such special topics as "Verbal Parasyntheses in -a" or "The Origin of the Name Canada." His chief fields of work were, however, French dialects and early French literature. His published studies on Canadian French belong to the period before 1885; his edition of the fables of Marie de France, which death left incomplete, formed the center of his labors during the last two decades of his life.

But it was as a teacher that he rendered his greatest service to scholarship. He knew what constitutes good work, he knew the severe discipline it demands, and he upheld and enforced his ideals; but, while he criticized and at times reproved, he had the rare power to do this without disheartening or discouraging. His relations to his pupils were as of father to child; his personal influence was no less potent than his learning and has left an imprint that will endure. Scholars and teachers whom he formed are continuing his work in every part of America, the first links of an unending chain.

In every field of his activity, his touch was firm, his foresight sure. The Modern Language Association has amply justified his faith; *Modern Language Notes* has vindicated his belief in its needfulness; modern languages have their place as a study of scientific value; and our Romance departments show increasing efficiency commensurate with their rapid increase in numbers.

Strongest of all Professor Elliott's titles to esteem was his personality. Frank but gentle, his criticism chastened, but left no sting; his praise where merited, was not withheld nor stinted in its measure. His genial altruism was reflected in all his dealings, and even those who knew him only by correspondence quickly came to feel that his interest in them and their work was personal and lasting. In perplexity or trouble all instinctively turned to him, and found him of ready counsel and unfailing good cheer. When in his closing days pain laid a heavy hand upon him, his thought was still of others and their comfort. Knowing they suffered in his suffering, his only words were words of hopefulness. And to the last his chosen themes were his pupils, colleagues, friends, and work. Respect, admiration, and love for him are a bond that holds together those who knew him and those who knew him not but honored his name.